Design Worksheet for Split Second

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1. Which of the possible venues do you think would best suit the play? Circle the one you choose and explain why you think it would work best.

**Proscenium**

Arena

Thrust

Flexible

I would put Split Second in a proscenium theatre so that I could make the most of extensive sets and drops and rely less on props to tell a location. This play needs to have very distinct sets to help tell the story - a creepy side street for the confrontation between Willis and Val, a professional police office, Val’s home, and finally the court room for the play to end in. All of these places could be suggested with backdrops, things that could easily fly in and out to make for fast scene changes.

2. What are some of the challenges posed by the play on the scene designer?

Like I mentioned with theatre choice, this play changes locations frequently, so the scene designer has to make each setting distinct and appropriate to the action happening there. It also occurs in New York City, a noisy, vibrant town, so sound effects would add to the feeling of being in such a busy place. The designer could also play with the lighting, perhaps shadowy light on the street, and bright, uncomfortable light in the police station and court room. It would be the designer’s job to create a tense, uncertain atmosphere for the characters to act in, one that reflects Val’s dilemma and his friends/families’ reactions as they piece together the truth.

3. Choose a character from the play and suggest how she/he should be dressed. In what ways do you think the costume would help accentuate his/her character.

Were I to costume this play, I would put Willis in clothes which reflected his immoral and seedy life. Though I don't wish to stereotype people, I would put him in a graphic T-shirt with a worn hoodie over that. He would have dark washed jeans and black Converse shoes. I think this outfit would immediately place him as a “street person” in the audience’s mind.

4. Provide ideas about the use of light in the play.

Well, it seems I got a little ahead of myself when talking about the scene designer… I think the light in this play can say a lot about how “structured” a current scene is. The police station, for instance, should be well lit because things are done by the books there. Val gets questioned and explains himself, supposedly “shedding light on the situation.” When he confronts Willis, however, his emotions control the scene, and those seem to be volatile. The light should be patchy so we can’t see everything that is going on and show that our characters are on a darker side of town. In the courtroom, I imagine it like an interrogation room with bright white light streaming in from fake looking lights. Val loses all of himself in that room, so the light should reflect the impersonal (and life altering) nature of that room.

5. Suggest music or sound effects that might be used to suggest the mood or atmosphere of the play and the transitions between parts of the play.

When the play opens, I would suggest that common city sounds are playing in the background: car horns, indistinct yelling, machinery noises. This would immediately set the play in a large, busy city. After Val murders Willis, I would have some subtle African music playing in the scene change since Willis attacked Val’s cultural background. Going forward after that scene, perhaps just some instrumental music with a lot of drums. I would have the courtroom scene completely silent except for the people speaking. I would also end the play in silence without closing music, showing how profoundly Val’s lie will affect him in the future.